

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 133330

FOR AMB YOUNG FROM UNA

FOLLOWING REPEAT LUBUMBASHI 556 ACTION SECSTATE INFO KINSHASA
LUSAKA BRUSSELS PARIS RABAT MAY 24

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L LUBUMBASHI 0556

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PINS, CG

SUBJECT: VISIT TO KOLWEZI ON MAY 23

REF: LLUBUMBASHI 525

SUMMARY: VICE CONSUL NALL VISITED KOLWEZI AGAIN DURING MORNING
AND AFTERNOON OF MAY 23. FRENCH MILITARY HAVE SECURED
CITY, CAPTURING MANY ARMS AND HAVE BEGUN OPERATIONS TO
THE SOUTH. FAZ ELEMENTS, PRIMARILY FROM KAMANYOLA
DIVISION, COMPLETELY UNDISCIPLINED AND ENGAGED IN WIDE
SCALE LOOTING. ALL EXPATRIATES EVACUATED EXCEPT FOR 7 OR 8.
MANY ZAIRIANS STILL LEAVING. ZAIRIAN RED CROSS OPERATIONS
HAVE JUST BEGUN TO BURY THE DEAD. THERE IS STILL NO
RELIABLE ACCOUNTING OF NUMBERS OF CIVILIANS KILLED.
END SUMMARY.

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1. FRENCH MILITARY OPERATIONS: THE FRENCH HQ HAVE
BEEN SET UP AT THE IMPALA HOTEL, WHICH IS BEING CLEANED
UP AND USED ALSO AS THE OFFICERS MESS. HE FRENCH
COMMANDER, OTHERWISE CHIEF OF THE FRENCH MILITARY
ASSISTANCE MISSION TO ZAIRE, COLONEL GRAS, WHO HAS
MORE THAN TWO EXPERIENCE IN ZAIRE. HIS STAFF
IS COMPOSED PRIMARILY OF MEMBERS OF THE FRENCH MILITARY

MISSION. FRENCH HAVE COMPLETED SWEEPS OF EUROPEAN AREAS AND AFRICAN CITIES, ALTHOUGH SOME AREAS ARE STILL CONSIDERED "LESS SECURE" AND FRENCH SOLDIERS MOVE THROUGH THOSE AREAS WITH WEAPONS READY. COLONEL GRAS SAID THAT FRENCH FORCES NUMBER 700 MEMBERS OF LEGION PARATROOP REGIMENT, PLUS SMALL CONTINGENT OF REGULAR FRENCH ARMY, PARATROOPERS (DEPLOYED AS SUPPORT STAFF AND AUXILIARIES) AND THE MEMBERS OF THE FRENCH MILITARY ADVISORY TEAM.

2. FOCUS OF FRENCH ACTIVITIES HAS SHIFTED FROM "RECONNAISSANCE IN FORCE" TO THE SOUTH OF THE CITY OF KOLWEZI. VICE CONSUL OBSERVED ONE SUCH COLUMN, CONSISTING OF ABOUT TWENTY JEEPS AND 75-80 LEGIONNAIRES ARMED WITH LIGHT WEAPONS AND 5-10 HEAVY MACHINE GUNS. ZAIRIAN SOLDIERS PRESENT AT IMPALA HOTEL TOLD VICE CONSUL THAT FRENCH PLANNING ANOTHER PARADROP, THIS IN VICINITY OF ZAIRIAN-ZAMBIAN BORDER. COLONEL GRAS TOLD VICE CONSUL HIS ORDERS ARE "TO CHASE AND DESTROY THE REBELS". HE WAS DELIBERATELY UNCLEAR WHETHER THIS ACTION WOULD ENTAIL PENETRATION OF ANGOLAN OR ZAMBIAN TERRITORY.

3. FRENCH OFFICERS OFFERED FOLLOWING CRITICISM OF BELGIAN OPERATION FOR EVACUATION OF CIVILIANS. FIRST OF ALL, OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS THAT SUCH AN OPERATION WAS UNDERWAY ALLOWED THE REBELS TO KILL EXPATRIATES
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AND GET WAY WITH HOSTAGES. SECONDLY, THE REMOVAL OF PRACTICALLY ALL THE EXPATRIATES CREATED A PANIC ATMOSPHERE FOR EXPATRIATES IN THE REST OF SHABA, AND WAS AN OPEN INVITATION OF THE FAZ TO LOOT ABANDONED HOUSES, WHICH MADE MUCH MORE DIFFICULT THE FRENCH TASK OF RESTORING ORDER.

4. FRENCH LEGIONNAIRES RECOUNTED TO VICE CONSUL THEIR ACTIVITIES DURING SWEEPS THROUGH AFRICAN NEIGHBORHOODS THE USUAL OPERATION WAS HOUSE-TO-HOUSE SEARCH. WHICH CONSISTED OF ROUSTING ALL OCCUPANTS FROM DWELLINGS AND A TOTAL EXAMINATION OF INTERIORS. SEARCHES TURNED UP FOUR LARGE CACHES OF ARMS AND SEVERAL SMALL CACHES MOST WERE FOUND IN MANIKA AND CITE METALKAT.

5. FRENCH HAVE THUS FAR CAPTURED ABOUT 400-500 ARMS OF VARYING DESCRIPTIONS. INCLUDED ARE 40-50 AK-47 ASSAULT RIFLES, 7 BREN GUNS, 10 STEN GUNS, ABOUT 50 ITALIAN SUBMACHINE GUNS, AT LEAST 6- .45 CALIBRE US MACHINE PISTOLS 3 SOVIET ROCKET LAUNCHERS, 40-50 BELGIAN FN ASSAULT RIFLES, 10-20 BELGIAN MACHINE GUNS, A SOVIET 80 MM RECOILLESS RIFLE, ABOUT 25 BAZOOKAS OF VARIOUS MAKES

INCLUDING US, FRENCH, BELGIAN, AND SOVIET ABOUT 100 MAUSER 52 CALIBER CARBINES, 7 MORTARS, OF VARIOUS MAKES AND A VARIETY OF ANCIENT AND HOMEMADE VILLAGERS RIFLES. MOST WEAPONS ARE SEVERAL YEARS OLD AND SOME BEAR FAZ OR ANC (ARMEE NATIONALE CONGOLAISE) MARKINGS. THE AMERICAN MADE MACHINE PISTOLS SEEM TO BE OF THE OLDEST MANUFACTURE.

6. ZAIRIAN MILITARY ACTIVITIES. COMMAND AND CONTROL OF THE UNITS OF THE KAMANYOLA DIVISION UNITS IN KOLWEZI HAS COMPLETELY DISAPPEARED. LOoting OF EXPATRIATES HOUSES IS WIDESPREAD AND COMMONPLACE, AND IS CARRIED OUT IN BROAD DAYLIGHT WITH INFREQUENT INTERVENTION BY THE FRENCH PARAS. MANY FAZ SOLDIERS HAVE ABANDONED THEIR ARMS. CONFIDENTIAL

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IN THEIR UNOBSTRUCTED PILLAGING. VICE CONSUL IN COMPANY OF FRENCH MAJOR, TALKED WITH THREE SEPARATE ZAIRIAN SOLDIERS WHO WERE IN THE PROCESS OF CARRYING AWAY LOOTED GOODS. ALL IDENTIFIED THEMSELVES AS KAMANYOLA BUT DID NOT KNOW THE WHEREABOUTS OF THEIR OFFICERS OR THEIR UNITS. FRENCH OFFICERS SAID THE FAZ GENERAL DIKUTA AND SINGA WERE MEETING THAT DAY TO DEVISE SOME PLAN TO RESTORE ORDER, BUT CONCEDED THAT THIS MAY BE A HOPELESS TASK. ONE FRENCH OFFICER OPINED THAT IT MAY BECOME NECESSARY TO RELIEVE THE KAMANYOLA OF THEIR ARMS AND EVACUATE THEM. A LEGIONNAIRE AT THE AIRPORT RECOUNTED HOW ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE BELGIAN AIRLIFT, SOLDIERS FROM THE KAMANYOLA APPEARED AT THE AIRPORT, APPARENTLY EMERGING FROM THEIR BUSH HIDING PLACES, AND ASKED TO BE FLOWN OUT. THE KAMANYOLA ARE ALSO REPORTED TO BE INCREASINGLY BRUTAL IN THEIR TREATMENT OF THE LOCAL POPULATION PERHAPS, INSPIRED BY THE FRENCH LEGIONNAIRES' "SEARCH AND SECURE" OPERATION IN THE CITIES. RANDOM FIRING IS ALSO A PROBLEM.

7. ON CONTRAST, THE FRENCH TRAINED ZAIRIAN PARATROOPERS ARE RELAXED AND RESERVAT AND HAVE REPLACED BELGIAN AND FRENCH SOLDIERS AT CHECKPOINTS AND STRONGHOLDS BETWEEN THE AIRPORT AND THE CENTER OF TOWN. WHILE THEY ARE BY NO MEANS MODELS OF MILITARY DISCIPLINE, COMMAND OF SOME OF THE FAZ PARAS HAS BEEN APPARENTLY TURNED OVER TO THE FRENCH, WHO USE THEM AS GUARDS AND WORK UNITS. VICE CONSUL OBSERVED OCCASIONAL FRATERNIZATION BETWEEN THE FAZ PARAS AND THE LEGIONNAIRES. THE PARAS ARE HIGHLY CONTEMPTUOUS OF THE KAMANYOLA AND FRICTION BETWEEN THE TWO UNITS IS OBVIOUS WHENEVER THEY ARE PRESENT AT THE SAME LOCATION. AS HE RODE FROM THE AIRPORT, VICE CONSUL SAW ONE KAMANYOLA SOLDIER HELD AT GUNPOINT AND BEING CONFIDENTIAL

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PUSHED BY FAZ PARAS FOR STEALING.

8. CIVILIAN PAPULATION: THERE ARE NOW ABOUT 7 OR 8 RESIDENT EXPATRIATES LEFT IN KOLWEZI. ALL EXPATRIATES MEDICAL PERSONNEL LEFT WITH THE LAST EVACUEES. LINES OF ZAIRIANS CARRYING PERSONAL BELONGINGS CAN BE SEEN HEADING OUT OF TOWN USUALLY TOWARD THE EAST. THERE IS STILL NO ELECTRIC POWER OR WATER IN THE CITY AND FOOD SUPPLIES ARE REPORTEDLY RUNNING SHORT. GECAMINES HOSPITAL IS STILL FUNCTIONING AND ZAIRIAN MEDICAL STAFF HAVE MOVED INTO THE HOSPITAL. HOSPITAL IS NOT OVERCROWDED AND NUMBER OF ZAIRIAN WOUNDED DOES NOT SEEM TO BE LARGE.

9. CIVILIAN DEAD: MOST BODIES REMAINED WHERE THEY HAD FALLEN AS OF MORNING OF MAY 23. ZAIRIAN RED CROSS TEAMS NUMBERING OVER 100 ARRIVED THAT AFTERNOON AND BEGAN RECOVERY AND BURIAL OPERATIONS. FRENCH MILITARY COMMANDERS HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY CONSIDER THEMSELVES TO HAVE NO RESPONSIBILITIES IN THIS REGARD. THUS REPORT THAT VICE CONSUL RECEIVED FROM JOURNALISTS AND ONE LEGIONNAIRE THAT FRENCH TROOPS HAD DISCOVERED A NEW MASSACRE SITE CONTAINING TWENTY EUROPEAN CORPSES, MOSTLY OF CHILDREN WAS UNCONFIRMED BY FRENCH COMMANDERS. IN INFORMAL CONVERSATION, FRENCH MAJOR TOLD VICE CONSUL THAT HIS ESTIMATE IS THAT THERE ARE 100-150 DEAD EXPATRIATES AND AS MANY ZAIRIAN CIVILIANS. HOWEVER AS THERE ARE NO PROCEDURES IN EFFECT FOR FRENCH SOLDIERS CONDUCTING HOUSE TO HOUSE SEARCHES TO REPORT NUMBER OF DEAD FOUND, HE THOUGHT AS YET THERE WAS NO ACCURATE ACCOUNT.

10. AMBIENCE: THE CITY OF KOLWEZI HAS CHANGED IN ONLY ONE MAJOR RESPECT SINCE VICE CONSULS LAST TRIP MAY 20 IT HAS BEEN PRACTICALLY EMPTIED OF PEOPLE. THERE ARE PRACTICALLY NO SIGNS OF LIFE AS ONE DRIVES THROUGH THE CITY, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ZAIRIAN SOLDIERS BUSILY ENGAGED IN LOOTING ONE HOUSE AFTER ANOTHER. THE CENTER

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OF ACTIVITY IS THE IMPALA HOTEL. WHICH CONTRARY TO MANY REPORTS HAD NOT BEEN DESTROYED. ZAIRIAN SOLDIERS WORK ON THE TASK OF CLEARING OUT BROKEN GLASS AND PLASTER AND MAKING THE PLACE SOMEWHAT MORE LIVEABLE FOR THE THIRTY OR SO FRENCH OFFICERS BUNKED THERE. THERE IS ALSO ONE SECTION OF THE BAR TERRACE WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN OVER TO WESTERN JOURNALISTS AS A PLACE TO SLEEP

AND EAT. THE FRENCH HAVE SET UP AN OPERATIONS CENTER
IN THE COURTYARD BEYOND THE RESTAURANT WITH
MAPS, COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT AND A HELICOPTER PAD. ONE
DOWITSSRS PRIVATE DINING ROOM HAS BEEN GIVEN OVER TO
DISPLAY OF CAPTURED ARMS. THE FRENCH OFFICERS ARE POLITE
BUT SOMEWHAT DISTANT AND WILL
NOT ALLOW ANY WESTERN HOURNALISTS
OR DIPLOMATS TO TRAVEL AROUND THE CITY WITHOUT A FRENCH
MILITARY ESCORT, PERHPAS, IN FEAR OF THE UNDISCIPLINED FAZ
TROOPS. A LA CATH 22, THE OFFICERS MAINTAIN THAT THEY HAVE
NO TROOPS TO SPARE AS EXCORTS, SO MOST VISITORS SELDOM
GET PAST THE IFQALA HOTEL.. A FRENCH ARMY PUBLIC RELATIONS
OFFICERS HAS INSTOHLLED HIMSELF AT THE IMPALA HOTEL AND
ORGANIZED SHORT TOURS FOR LARGE GROUPS OF JOURNALISTS. IN GENERAL
THERE IS LITTLE TO SEE AND LESS TO DO. AND THE OPINION
OF MANY JOURNALISTS AND FRENCH SOLDIERS ALIKE
IS THAT KOLWEZI IS ONE OF THE MOST DEPRESSING
BATTLEFIELDS THEY HAVE EVER ENCOUNTERED. BORG. UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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